

The City of Charlotte

TRANSPORTATION

Action Plan

2007 Annual Report



CHARLOTTE.



In May of 2006, the Charlotte City Council adopted the Transportation Action Plan (TAP) — the City's first comprehensive, multi-modal, long-range transportation plan. The TAP includes the City's policies, projects and programs that will be necessary over the next 25 years to accommodate projected growth and reduce existing transportation deficiencies.



To meet the City's goals, the TAP recommends an investment of \$3.57 billion (not inflated) through 2030 to build and maintain local thoroughfares, streets, connectivity projects, traffic signal systems, pedestrian pathways, and bicycle facilities.

Increases in the various types of transportation capacity defined in the TAP, in conjunction with increases in freeway and expressway capacities, and expanded bus and rapid transit services, will be necessary as Charlotte becomes one of the nation's 10-12 most populated cities in the next 25 years.

I am pleased to present the 2007 Annual Report for the Transportation Action Plan. This report describes the achievements and the challenges that occurred in 2007, when we began to implement the goals, strategies and projects described in the TAP. I believe an annual report is important not just to highlight our successes, but also to identify possible changes in strategies or investments that we should consider in the upcoming years.

Council and staff have been implementing the TAP's policies and programs since its adoption. In the years ahead, City Council will continue to make difficult decisions about transportation priorities, revenues and growth management so that Charlotte can continue to be one of the most livable and economically attractive large cities in the nation.

Curt Walton,
City Manager

January 2008

Transportation Action Plan 2007 Annual Report

The Transportation Action Plan (TAP) describes the goals, objectives and policies that are necessary to make Charlotte one of the premier cities in the nation for providing land use and transportation choices. A full copy of the Transportation Action Plan is available at <http://cdot.charmeck.org>.

To achieve the City's goals, the TAP recommends a variety of investments in transportation, presently estimated at \$3.57 billion for construction and maintenance expenditures by 2030. This level of investment—together with concurrent investments in State-maintained free-ways and expressways and in new rapid transit lines—will be necessary to accommodate the City's ongoing growth, while protecting the high quality of life in Charlotte.

Each year's Annual Report describes the progress and challenges in implementing the TAP. These annual reviews enable City Council and staff to identify obstacles that must be overcome and determine changes in the resources or actions necessary to achieve the City's transportation-related goals.

Among the highlights in 2007:

- City Council adopted the **Urban Street Design Guidelines** that will lead to more and better streets for all users.
- The City **met several land use targets** in 2007 by focusing development in Centers and Corridors, a key strategy for implementing the TAP.
- Charlotte's first light rail line, the **Lynx Blue Line**, opened successfully on November 26, 2007. Earlier, voters reaffirmed their support for the half-cent sales tax for transit.
- The TAP was honored by the Institute of Transportation Engineers as the recipient of ITE's national "**Best Project Award, 2007.**" One hallmark of the award: the TAP is considered a model for other cities.

The annual report is organized according to the five goals of the TAP (shown at the top of each of the following pages). For each of the goals, the 2007 Annual Report summarizes the achievements of the past year, current activities, and the issues and challenges affecting implementation of the TAP.

TAP GOAL
1

*Continue implementation of the
Centers and Corridors strategy.*

Achievements

- **City Council adopted the TAP** in May 2006. The TAP underscores the importance of the Centers, Corridors and Wedges growth management strategy as a way to guide growth toward places where appropriate levels of transportation infrastructure, multimodal capacity and connectivity can be provided.
- **The Centers, Corridors and Wedges Map was adopted** as part of the TAP. This map (Figure 1 in the *TAP Policy Document*) will enable the City to monitor whether we are meeting the Centers, Corridors and Wedges land use targets. (*The map is displayed on the inside back cover of this report.*)
- In compliance with TAP Policies 1.1.2 – 1.1.4, **the City monitors** the amount of residential and non-residential development occurring in Centers, Corridors and Wedges.
- **Charlotte's first light rail transit line**—the 9.6 mile Lynx Blue Line—began revenue service on November 26, 2007.

Current Activities

- **The rezoning review reports have been updated** by staff to indicate whether each rezoning request is located in a Center, Corridor or Wedge.
- **Mechanisms to monitor growth have been developed** by staff to implement Policies 1.1.2-1.1.4, which relate to the TAP land use targets. The monitoring information is used by CDOT staff during monthly rezoning reviews, and is incorporated in the Transportation Focus Area Plan and in the TAP Annual Report.
- **The public review process** on the detailed definitions of Centers, Corridors and Wedges has been delayed until Spring, 2008. This process should enable stakeholders to readily understand the City's growth management framework.

Development approvals are now tracked to ensure we are meeting land use targets.



Issues and Challenges

► The concept of the Centers, Corridors and Wedges growth framework has been discussed in Charlotte for over a decade. The TAP affirmed the value of this concept and prompted the Planning Department to begin the update of this framework which will further support **the transition of Centers, Corridors and Wedges from concept to implementation**. This transition will result in strategies that may be controversial.

► **Adopted land use targets help monitor implementation** of the Centers, Corridors and Wedges growth management framework. Policies 1.1.2 and 1.1.3 state that the City will ensure at least 40% of new households, 70% of new multi-family units, 75% of new office development

and 75% of new employment will be located within the centers and corridors.

► **The City has met the office and employment targets** (Table A) and—for the first time since 2001— **met the targets for total households and multi-family residential units**.

TABLE A FY 07 Annual Measurement: Development Locating Within Centers and Corridors		
	TARGET	ACTUAL
TAP Policy 1.1.2		
Total New Households	40%	46.7%
New Multi-Family Households	70%	73.6%
TAP Policy 1.1.3		
Total New Office Development	75%	91.7%
New Employment	75%	80.7%

► **The City's integrated transportation and land use strategy encourages a greater percentage of our households be located within ¼ mile of schools, parks, shopping and transit service**. This can reduce vehicle miles of travel by shortening many vehicle trips and by making it possible for some people to walk, ride bicycles or take transit to more destinations. However, the latest analysis (Table B) shows that the trends are in the wrong direction on two of the four categories. In order to reverse these trends, the City will need to more actively implement the Centers, Corridors and Wedges

TABLE B
Percentage of City Population Living Within 1/4 Mile of Amenities and Services

Year	Shopping	Schools	Parks	Transit*
2004	45.6%	13.0%	16.9%	63.5%
2006	51.4%	11.8%	16.1%	61.2%
2007	52.5%	13.0%	15.7%	54.0%

* Local Transit Route

growth management framework through future area plans, rezoning reviews and more partnerships to create adequate infrastructure.

*Prioritize, design, construct and maintain **convenient and efficient transportation facilities** to improve safety and neighborhood livability, foster economic development, promote transportation choices and meet land use objectives.*

Achievements

- By adopting the TAP and Urban Street Design Guidelines, the City Council demonstrated its **commitment to creating a multi-modal transportation system** with benefits for motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, employers or business owners, and neighborhood residents.
- The City is implementing a **context-based design approach** (consistent with the Urban Street Design Guidelines) on all City-sponsored transportation projects.
- The City is developing a **pedestrian safety and awareness campaign** that incorporates several pedestrian initiatives—the Pedestrian Master Plan, pedestrian safety, and public information regarding the new Pedestrian Beacon traffic control device—in a single campaign.
- During FY 2007 CDOT **designed and/or implemented:**
 - ▶ 4 miles of road projects
 - ▶ 10 intersection projects
 - ▶ 75 obsolete traffic signal controllers replaced
 - ▶ 155 traffic signals in signal systems retimed
 - ▶ 22 miles of sidewalk projects
 - ▶ 10 miles of bicycle projects
- **Renovation of the Charlotte Transportation Center** to integrate with the Lynx Blue Line was completed in November, 2007. The refurbishment of the Strawberry Hill Park and Ride Lot (at Providence and Sardis Road) was completed in December 2007.



The Lynx Blue Line began operations November 26, 2007, and is the first of five planned rapid transit corridors.



The intersection of Scott, Kenilworth, Romany and Harding was retrofitted with a left-turn lane, pedestrian-crossing islands, stamped crosswalks and countdown timers to provide a safer intersection for all travelers.

Current Activities

- In order to create more “complete streets,” the City is applying the **Urban Street Design Guidelines** on all City-sponsored transportation projects.
- Over the 2008-2010 bond cycles, CDOT expects to **plan, design and/or construct** the following:
 - ▶ 11 miles of road projects
 - ▶ 0 intersection projects
 - ▶ 75 obsolete traffic signal controllers replaced per year
 - ▶ 200 traffic signals retimed per year
 - ▶ 45 miles of sidewalk projects
 - ▶ 10 miles of bicycle projects per year
 - ▶ upgrade all traffic signals to LEDs
- The Traffic Impact Study Guidelines are being converted to **Transportation Impact Study Guidelines** to reflect a multi-modal transportation approach.
- **Citywide Pedestrian and Bicycle Plans are being developed** by staff and will be presented for City Council’s consideration in 2008.
- The Metropolitan Transit Commission approved the update of the **Countywide Transit Services Plan**, detailing CATS’ short-term (five-year) plan for growing and improving transit services. The plan, developed with significant public involvement, identifies improvements to crosstown service, increased frequency and other bus amenities.

Issues and Challenges

- ▶ **The TAP relies heavily on the implementation of the Urban Street Design Guidelines.** The USDG will create more streets and higher quality streets. The USDG will provide more connectivity, route choices and better streets for all users. The City will be considering the necessary ordinance changes to implement the USDG in 2008. Modifying City codes and ordinances to implement the USDG is critical to advancing the TAP.



The recently adopted Urban Street Design Guidelines will enable all neighborhoods to have more green space and tree-lined streets, like those found in more established neighborhoods, such as Wesley Heights (above).

Collaborate with local and regional partners on land use, transportation and air quality to enhance environmental quality and promote long-term regional sustainability.

Achievements

- The City actively fosters regional transportation, air quality and sustainability objectives through **involvement in the Mecklenburg Union Metropolitan Planning Organization (MUMPO)**. City staff not only participate actively in MUMPO planning activities, but are responsible for most technical activities.
- City, NCDOT and MPO staff completed tasks outlined in the **regional travel demand model** maintenance agreement. A FY 08 work plan outlining additional regional model maintenance tasks was developed by City & NCDOT staff and approved by the Metrolina Regional Executive Committee.
- In November, 2007, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) approved CATS' request to enter the preliminary engineering phase of the **Lynx Blue Line Extension (Northeast Corridor)**. This is the latest successful step towards federal approval of the design and construction of the next mass transit link in the 2030 Corridor System Plan.

Current Activities

- City, State and regional planning organizations within the Charlotte metropolitan area began work on a study to determine if any major highways should be considered for **High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV), High Occupancy Toll (HOT) or other types of managed lanes**.
- In 2007, City and MUMPO staff will identify roadway, transit and alternate mode transportation projects for inclusion in the **2035 Long-Range Transportation Plan**.
- City Council developed a **legislative strategy** to address statewide and local transportation funding shortfalls. No action was taken by the N.C. General Assembly, however, this session.
- Planning Department staff continued work on the **Infrastructure General Development Policies (GDP)** intended to more closely link land use and development decisions to the availability of public infrastructure to support it. City Council approved the I-GDP in November, 2007.
- City and NCDOT staff continue to discuss how **NCDOT's road designs** will be made compatible with the City's transportation and land development objectives.
- City and County staff **worked with over 80 private companies** to implement "Clean Air Works!" – a series of activities intended to reduce air pollutant emissions during ozone season.



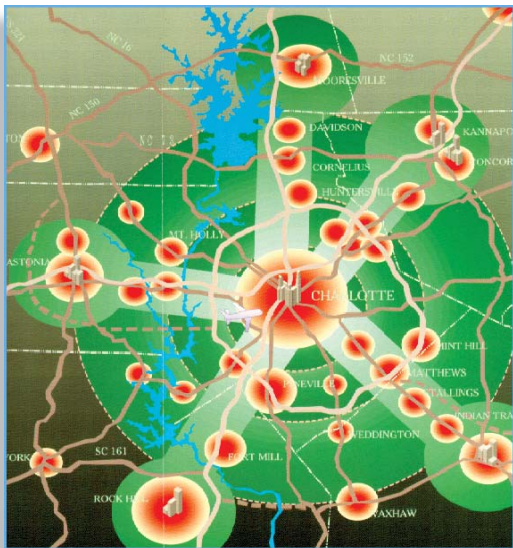
- City and Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools staff continue to work on **school siting and design changes** that could be implemented to promote walking and bicycling to school.



Schools in neighborhoods on a connected street system, such as Shamrock Gardens, provide more opportunities for children to walk or bike to school.

Issues and Challenges

- ▶ In 2006, the Centralina and Catawba Regional Council of Governments convened a **Regional Visioning Task Force** to discuss the region's growth and economic issues, opportunities and challenges. Ways to improve regional growth planning efforts—including implementation of the Centers, Corridors and Wedges growth management framework—should continue to be explored.
- ▶ The lack of a regional transportation planning agency for the entire **air quality non-attainment area** will continue to require ad hoc arrangements to accomplish basic regional transportation planning and air quality functions.
- ▶ CDOT worked with regional partners and federal agencies to help the N.C. Division of Air Quality (DAQ) develop a strategy to meet the 8-hour ozone air quality standard by 2010. **The State Implementation Plan (SIP)** proposes county-level motor vehicle emissions budgets, however, which could limit federal funding for highway and transit projects in 2008 and 2009.



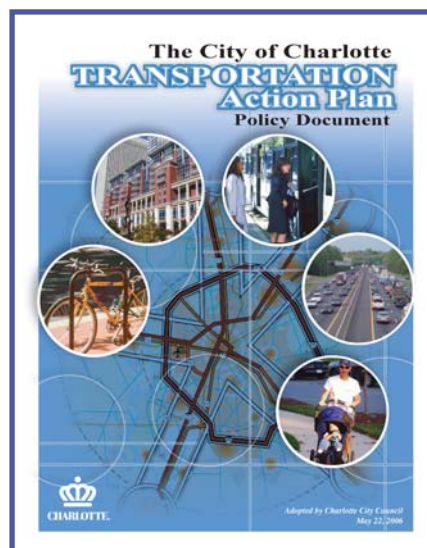
In 1994, a multi-county “Committee of 100” used the Centers, Corridors and Wedges concept to make regional transportation and land use recommendations. This concept was expected to be applied throughout the region.

TAP GOAL
4

Communicate *land use and transportation objectives and services* **to key stakeholders.**

Achievements

- Through the adoption of the TAP, the City has clearly defined its **comprehensive set of transportation-related strategies**. With the TAP, City residents can now read about the City's transportation vision and intentions **in one document**.
- The City's **Capital Investment Plan** has been revamped to be consistent with the TAP.
- The City's **Transportation Focus Area Plan and CDOT's Strategic Operating Plan** have been refined to reflect the TAP's goals and performance objectives.
- The TAP Policy Document and Technical Document can be found **on the internet** at <http://cdot.charmeck.org>.



Current Activities

- The City is **tracking land development permits** monthly and annually to monitor the Centers, Corridors and Wedges growth management targets. This information is available to elected officials, staff and citizens to determine how well we are fulfilling our growth management vision and meeting specific land use targets.
- The City is annually **tracking accident data, congestion hot spots, and bicycle and pedestrian levels of service** to best determine and prioritize which transportation projects should be implemented during the next 5 to 10 years.



Issues and Challenges

- ▶ The City needs to **continuously communicate** the importance of implementing Charlotte's transportation and land use vision to accommodate the growth projected for the city and region, while preserving our quality of life.
- ▶ **More and different types of information** will need to be reported and made available for City residents and other stakeholders.
- ▶ **Annual surveys** will need to be devised and implemented to monitor the level of public understanding of the TAP.



Continued growth in the Charlotte region will see increasing travel on the City's roadways. Continued implementation and funding of the TAP will help Charlotte address the City's transportation challenges.

TAP GOAL
5

Seek financial resources, external grants and funding partnerships necessary to implement transportation programs and services.

Achievements

- When City Council adopted the TAP, members recognized that it recommended spending \$3.57 billion to build, operate and maintain **locally-funded transportation infrastructure** through 2030.
- To begin implementing the TAP, City Council voted in 2006 to **provide more financial capacity** for bond measures (including transportation) in 2006, 2008 and 2010, as well as an annual \$4.3 million increase in the street resurfacing budget.



- In **November, 2006**, Charlotte residents passed the **bond measure** that included \$65 million for roadway, signalization, connectivity and bicycle projects, \$12 million for sidewalk projects and \$1.5 million for traffic calming improvements.
- The City hired the Surface Transportation Policy Partnership to perform a review of **transportation funding options** used throughout the country. Those findings were presented to Council's Transportation Committee and City Council in 2007.
- In September, 2007, City Council supported construction of the **Monroe Bypass/Connector, the region's first toll facility**. The roadway will provide a freeway connection between I-485 and U.S. 74 east of Monroe. The \$350 million project can serve as a model for an alternative funding source to address increasing traffic congestion.

Construction on Old Pineville Road as part of the South Corridor Improvement Program is providing increased auto capacity at intersections, as well as improved sidewalks, planting strips and bike lanes.

Current Activities

- The City plans to pursue **bond measures** in 2008 and 2010 to continue to fund the TAP.
- In recognition of NCDOT's dire financial situation and our \$3.57 billion local transportation plan, City Council identified a **legislative strategy** for a new local revenue source. This is expected to be an ongoing legislative consideration in 2008 as City Council seeks to adequately fund the TAP.
- The annual updates of the **Capital Investment Plan and Focus Area Plan** will be reported to City Council to indicate which of the TAP's expenditure goals are being met.

Issues and Challenges

- ▶ City Council and staff will need to continue to work with local, regional and state partners to implement **changes in transportation funding** to reduce existing deficiencies and address growth in travel.
- ▶ Without a dedicated transportation funding source, at levels consistent with the TAP, Charlotte will struggle to keep pace with our relentless growth in population, employment and travel. The City must continue to work with its regional and state partners to achieve an **appropriate level of funding** for both state and local roads.
- ▶ On November 6, 2007, Mecklenburg County voters overwhelmingly **defeated an effort to repeal the half-cent sales tax for transit**. The 70 to 30 percent margin to reject the repeal and preserve the principal source of funding for mass transit can be viewed as a strong endorsement by the voters for continued investment in transit and in the Centers and Corridors Land Use vision for Charlotte and Mecklenburg County.
- ▶ The North Carolina General Assembly did not specifically address transportation funding during 2007. **The General Assembly did give all counties the authority** to levy up to a 0.4 percent land transfer tax or a 0.25 percent local sales tax, but not both. Prior to implementing either tax, counties must receive approval through a citizen referendum.



Charlotte's pressing need is adequate funding for roads to keep pace with growth.

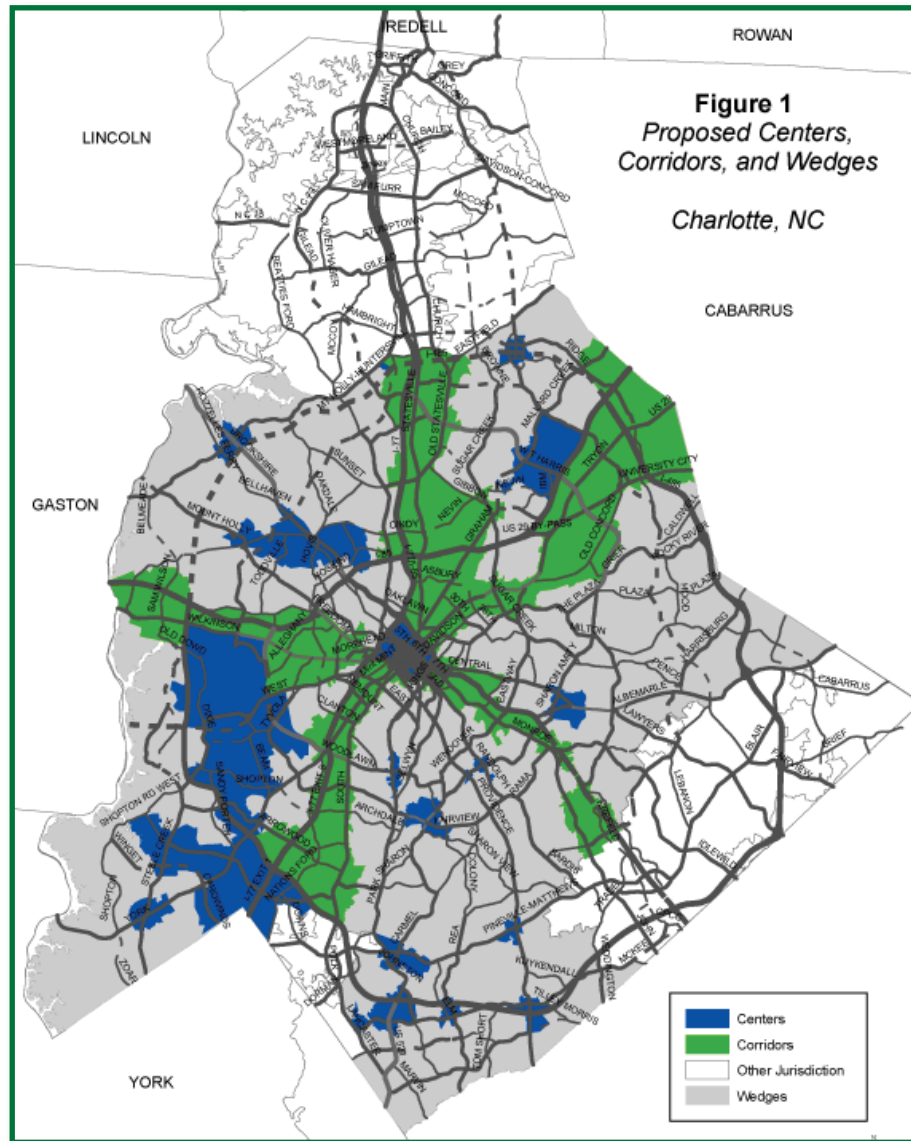
Conclusion

Charlotte's City Council took a crucial first step in addressing the City's transportation challenges in 2006 by adopting the 25-year Transportation Action Plan. The TAP calls for a series of policies, projects and programs that are necessary to accommodate ongoing growth, while protecting our quality of life.

This report summarizes the achievements, current activities and challenges that the City is facing as it begins to implement the TAP. There have been many achievements this year and a large variety of work is programmed for the year ahead, but there are also significant challenges to meeting our transportation goals.

A key challenge facing the City Council will be to identify a permanent and reliable funding source for transportation. A second, ongoing challenge will be to ensure that Charlotte grows in a manner consistent with the Centers, Corridors and Wedges growth management framework. A third challenge is the need to update city codes and ordinances to successfully implement the TAP and the recently-adopted Urban Street Design Guidelines.

The TAP Annual Report provides an opportunity each year for residents, elected officials and staff to reflect on our transportation achievements, discuss our transportation challenges and identify refined or new ways to meet our transportation goals.



The Centers, Corridors and Wedges Map (adopted as part of the *Transportation Action Plan*) helps provide the framework for land use and transportation investment decisions in Charlotte.



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